

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



SOLEMNITY REFLECTION

The doctrine of the Assumption, proclaimed by Pius XII on 1 November 1950, solemnly described this as the crowning event of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are no explicit references to the Assumption in the Scriptures, but the declaration sees in the Marian texts the implicit foundation of this truth which has been further developed in Christian tradition. Paul has emphasized that all humanity shares in the resurrection of Christ and argues, retrospectively, that if humanity does not share in the resurrection then neither has Christ risen. Since all the dead rise in Christ then it is clear that Mary shares in this universal blessing. According to tradition, and the declaration of the Immaculate Conception (1854), Mary's unique role began with her conception which, because of her inimitable role in the salvation story, must have been free from the taint of sin. It is only sin and its consequence mortality, that delays the final triumph of the ordinary Christian. The logic of the argument is that since Mary did not share in original sin then there is no deferment in her sharing in the resurrection of Christ.

The portrayal of the victorious woman in the Book of Revelation is clearly intended by the seer of Patmos as an image of the Church. However, it has also been argued that Mary, the model disciple, is an eschatological image of the Church, and that she already enjoys the glory that the faithful will come to share in the fullness of time.

Tradition also developed the notion of Mary as the new Eve. The image of Christ as the new Adam finds its parallel in Mary as the new Eve. She is obedient to the Spirit and conceives the new Adam. Scripture generally attests to her continuing cooperative role at Nazareth, Bethlehem, Cana and Calvary. By analogy, that which is said of Christ is applied proportionally to Mary.

It is perhaps easier to see the unique role of Mary as the 'Mother of God,' an appellation accorded her by the Council of Ephesus (431), which was more fully situated in the mystery of

salvation in the teaching of Vatican II. This latter Council, despite initial proposals, did not dedicate a special document to Mary, but located her role and relevance in a consideration of the life of the Church. The gospel of the visitation, and the declarations that draw on this narrative are fitting ways to reflect on the unique contribution of Mary, a contribution which inevitably leads us to a deeper consideration of her Son.

STEWARDSHIP: “After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example more perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship ... She was called and gifted by God; she responded generously, creatively and prudently; she understood her divinely assigned role as ‘handmaid’ in terms of service and fidelity.” (U.S. Bishops’ pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A disciple’s Response*)

READINGS TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY

22 AUG ‘21

Jos. 24:1-2, 15-17, 18: In a touching farewell discourse Joshua reminds the people of all that God has done for them as they prepare to cross the Jordan into the promised land. But as they prepare to cross over, they must now choose who they wish to follow

Eph. 5:21-32: This passage is difficult to hear for contemporary ears. It speaks of relationships and how the love of a woman and a man in marriage is the sign of the love of Christ for His Church.

Jn. 6:60-69: As we have listened to the gospel of John over the past few weeks we experience the crisis that has been mounting regarding the teaching of Jesus. “This is a hard saying...” It is too hard for some disciples who decide to part their ways with Jesus

EUCCHARIST

INFALIBLE

Today we celebrate a feast devoted to a doctrine about Mary’s assumption into heaven which is, relatively speaking, very new, declared officially by Pope Pius XII on 1 November 1950 even though the devotion and prayers in celebration around the welcoming of Mary into heaven go back to as early as the 6th cent.

What is the Assumption?

The Assumption is the doctrine that says that at the end of her life on earth Mary was assumed, body and soul, into heaven, just as Enoch, Elijah, and perhaps others had been before her. Some people think Catholics believe Mary “ascended” into heaven. That’s not correct. Christ, by his own power, ascended into heaven. Mary was assumed or taken up into heaven by God. She didn’t do it under her own power.

The Church has never formally defined whether she died or not, and the integrity of the doctrine of the Assumption would not be impaired if she did not in fact die, but the almost universal consensus is that she did die. Pope Pius XII, in *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), defined that Mary, “after the completion of her earthly life” (note the silence regarding her death), “was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven.”

The possibility of a bodily assumption before the Second Coming is suggested by Matthew 27:52–53: “[T]he tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep

were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many." Did all these Old Testament saints die and have to be buried all over again? There is no record of that, but it is recorded by early Church writers that they were assumed into heaven, or at least into that temporary state of rest and happiness often called "paradise," where the righteous people from the Old Testament era waited until Christ's resurrection (see Luke 16:22, 23:43; Heb. 11:1–40; 1 Pet. 4:6), after which they were brought into the eternal bliss of heaven.

No Remains

There is also what might be called the negative historical proof for Mary's Assumption. It is easy to document that, from the first, Christians gave homage to saints, including many about whom we now know little or nothing. Cities vied for the title of the last resting place of the most famous saints. Rome, for example, houses the tombs of Peter and Paul, Peter's tomb being under the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the early Christian centuries relics of saints were zealously guarded and highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Coliseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved.

It is agreed upon that Mary ended her life in Jerusalem, or perhaps in Ephesus. However, neither of those cities nor any other claimed her remains, though there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. And why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there weren't any bones to claim, and people knew it. Here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints, but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

Back to the main topic, Infallibility

This is what the Catholic church claims:

In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith."

The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. . . . The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed," and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith." This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

What infallibility means

First of all, let's start with the **purpose** of infallibility:

"It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error.... To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals." (*Catechism*, 890)

Infallibility is a **gift** of Christ and the Holy Spirit that gives us clarity and certainty about the faith itself and morality.

Infallibility just means that certain teachings of the Catholic Church are guaranteed to be without error. That's **not** to say that they are the full and final word on the topic: later teachings may deepen and further clarify aspects of the original teaching.

Exactly what teachings?

The charism of infallibility is fully engaged only in **definitive** Magisterial teachings on faith and morals. This can occur in either...

- Ordinary teachings, or
- Extraordinary teachings

The Magisterium is the teaching office of the Catholic Church. It is exercised by the Pope alone when he teaches officially, or by the whole "college" of bishops together with the Pope.

Most Magisterial teachings are **ordinary**. The Pope's ordinary teachings are issued in the course his normal activity: his encyclicals and other documents, various addresses, etc.

The college of bishops also has an "ordinary and universal" Magisterium. This is seen whenever the individual bishops teach the same faith — that is, in union with the Pope and each other, even if they're dispersed in their separate dioceses. It's also seen when an ecumenical council teaches definitively but without issuing a solemn definition.

Occasionally, the Magisterium issues **extraordinary** definitions of doctrine. This occurs when the Pope teaches *ex cathedra*, officially and solemnly defining some truth of the faith. The official and solemn definitions of ecumenical councils (such as the Council of Trent, the First Vatican Council, etc.) are also extraordinary pronouncements.

Remember, it is the **definitive** teachings of the Magisterium that are considered to be infallible. This *usually* means that they explicitly state they're defining some matter of the faith, or put forth a position as to be definitively held.

But not always.

Some things that are taught repeatedly by the Magisterium can also be considered definitive, even if they're not explicitly named to be such.

Infallible teachings require the assent of faith

The Catholic Church uses its charism of infallibility to give the faithful clarity and certainty about morality and the faith itself.

As such, Catholics are required to give the "assent of faith" to such teachings. This means that our faith in them rests directly on our faith either in the Word of God, or in the Holy Spirit's real & active assistance in the Magisterium.

We take that **quite** seriously!

How often are infallible teachings made?

You've probably heard a very common **myth** that infallibility has only been used a few times. That is **not** the case!

It's true that the Pope has exercised only rarely his own **extraordinary** power of defining the faith. But ecumenical councils have issued many extraordinary definitions over the years. And both the Pope and the full college of bishops have issued very many definitions in the course of their **ordinary** Magisterium. And of course...

...infallibility hinges on whether a teaching is **definitive**, regardless of whether it's ordinary or extraordinary.

When people claim that infallibility is very rare, often they're trying to justify their own rejection of some doctrine. They're trying to *minimize* the number of cases where doctrine is binding.

But that's exactly backwards!

The main job of bishops is to **teach** the Gospel. They do so with a special assistance of the Holy Spirit himself so that we may hear a faithful, accurate proclamation of the one true faith. Although *individual* bishops may err in their official teachings about faith and morals, the Magisterium as a whole never does. Nor does the Pope, by nature of Christ's special creation of Peter's office as one that "confirms the brethren" in the faith.

Frequently, the Magisterium sees fit to **define** some point of doctrine so that we can see, understand, and hold it with great clarity. These definitions are infallible, and we must believe them with the assent of faith.

But much of the time, the Magisterium teaches without making such definitions. Are we free to ignore these teachings that are **not** infallible?

"Am I free to reject any non-definitive teachings that I don't like?"

Not at all!

We must believe these teachings, too, although a lesser degree of belief is required. The technical expression is "a religious submission of mind and will". This is less than the absolute assent of faith, but it still means that we must honestly strive to understand and **accept** these teachings.

As a practical matter, we should assume that the even Church's non-definitive teachings are correct. They are still made with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, although not to the degree that guarantees that they're free of error.

We should have very compelling, objective reasons before challenging such teachings. (And please note that the most frequent topics of dissent are **not** in this category! Topics like contraception, abortion, divorce, and homosexuality are all addressed by **definitive** Church teachings.)

Also remember that we tend to prefer our own flawed opinions, rather than admitting that we have to change.

This call to *change* is the hard and unending work of Christian discipleship. It's known as **conversion**.

A gift of light & truth

Christ has given us an extraordinary gift in the Catholic Magisterium. It is the means by which Christ ensures that the light of his saving Gospel will shine on every generation.

When the Church teaches infallibly, it gives us great light & clarity.

But even in its non-definitive teaching, the Church still shines with the clear light of truth — a light that is far stronger than the darkness of the world.

"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but Will have the light of life." (Jn. 8:12)

PRAYERS

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

O glorious St. Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations, to work with gratitude and joy, in a spirit of penance for the remission of my sins, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God, to work with order, peace, moderation and patience, without ever shrinking from weariness and difficulties, to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, having always death before my eyes and the account that I must render of time lost, of talents wasted, of good omitted of vain complacency in success, so fatal in the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after your example, O Patriarch, St. Joseph. Such shall be my watchword in life and in death.

Prayer to Mary Assumed into Heaven

O Blessed Virgin Mary,
united to the victorious Christ in heaven,
you are the image and first-flowering of the Church
as she is to be perfected in the world to come.
You shine forth as a sign of sure hope and solace
for the pilgrim People of God.
In your Assumption,
you manifest the fullness of redemption
and appear as the spotless image of the Church
responding in joy
to the invitation of the Bridegroom, your Son,
who is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Grant that we may follow your example on earth
thereby imitating your Son as well
and being enabled to share your glory,
with Him for all eternity.

SCHEDULE TWENTIETH WEEK ORDINARY TIME

SATURDAY 14 - SUNDAY 22 AUGUST

Saturday 14 Aug M St. Maximilian Kolbe Priest Martyr

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Preface of Martyrs, & Eucharistic Prayer III

1:30 p.m.– 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Solemnity of the Assumption

Proper, Gloria, Preface for Feast I, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Parish of St. Stephen Martyr)

Sunday 15 Aug Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface for Feast, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Linda Ann Gerena RIP)

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface for Feast, Eucharistic Prayer I

(Intention: Edward Boone RIP)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface for Feast, Eucharistic Prayer I

(Intention: Jane Barlett RIP)

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

Monday 16 Aug Day Off

Tuesday 17 Aug 20th Week Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. For Religious #13A, Preface & Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Richard Fulton RIP)

6:30 p.m. Meeting

Wednesday 18 Aug 20th Week Ordinary Time

6:30 a.m. Mass 17th Sunday, Preface for Weekdays II & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass 17th Sunday, Preface for Weekdays II & Eucharistic Prayer III

Thursday 19 Aug 20th Week Ordinary Time St. John Eudes Priest

8:30 a.m. Mass 23rd Sunday, Preface , Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: William Burnett RIP)

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass 23rd Sunday, Preface , Eucharistic Prayer II

Friday 20 Aug M St Bernard, Abbot, Doctor of the Church

8:30 a.m. Mass Cancelled Funeral Arlington National Cemetery

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Adoration

Saturday 21 Aug M St. Pius X, Pope

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Preface of Holy Pastors, Eucharistic Prayer III

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Twenty-First Sunday

(Intention: Anton Raniszewski RIP)

Sunday 22 Aug Twenty-First Sunday Ordinary Time

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface Sunday II, Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Kenny Morris RIP)

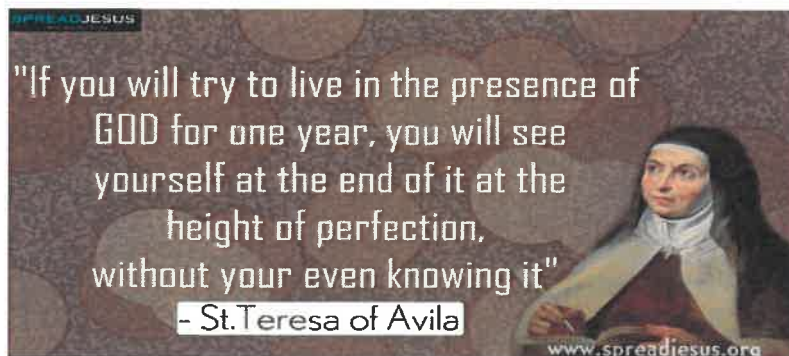
8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface Sunday II, Eucharistic Prayer III

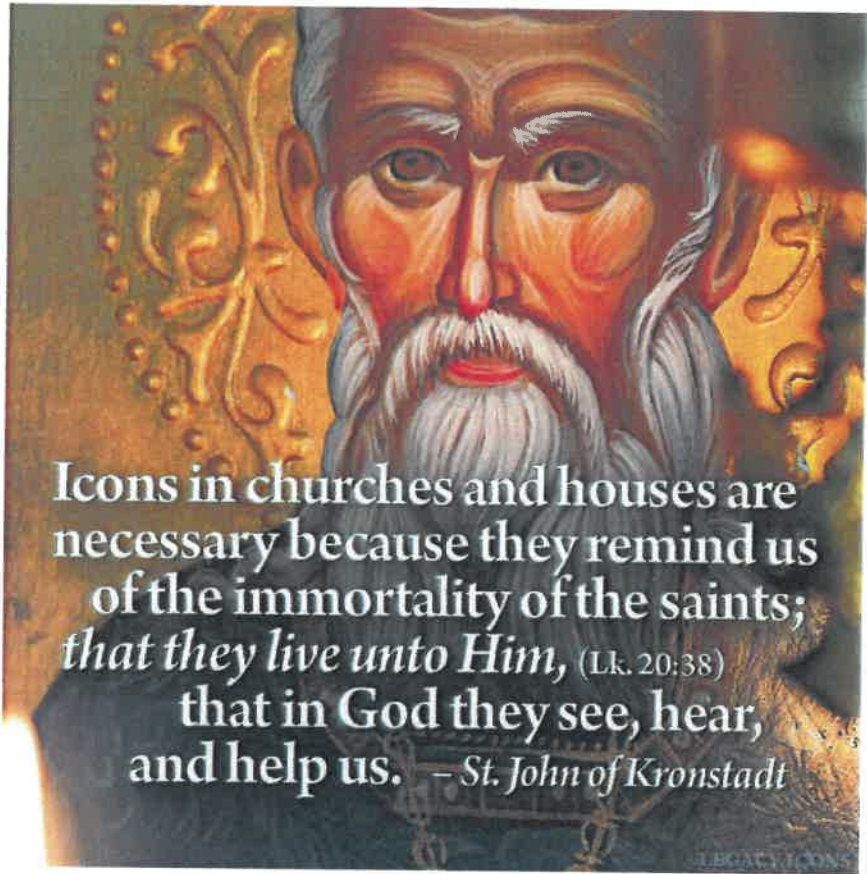
(Intention: Parish of St. Stephen Martyr)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface Sunday II, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Holy Souls in Purgatory)

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig





Icons in churches and houses are
necessary because they remind us
of the immortality of the saints;
that they live unto Him, (Lk. 20:38)
that in God they see, hear,
and help us. – *St. John of Kronstadt*

LEGACY ICONS